

ART AS TOP-RANKING MEDICAL HOBBY*

ROBERT LATOU DICKINSON

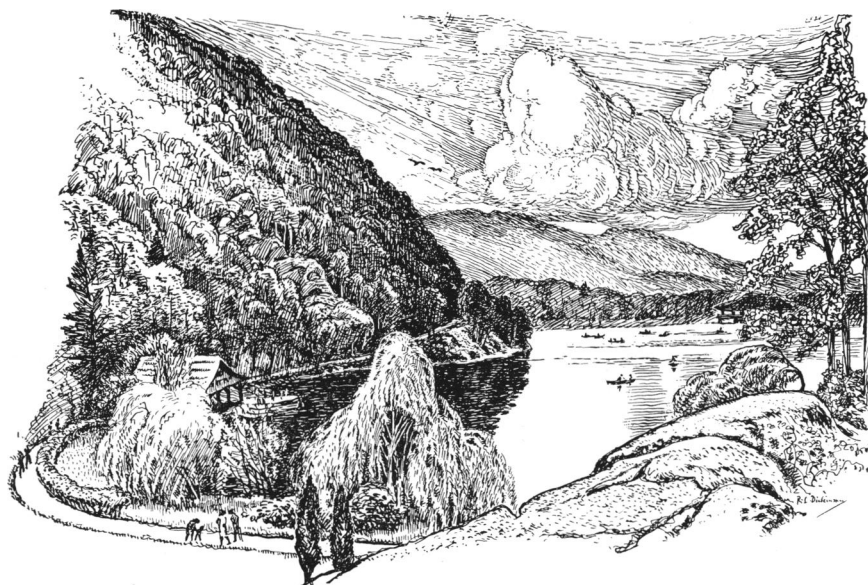
HONORED as he is by the election, it is grievous indeed to the President of the New York Physicians Art Club to be absent, even though it be by reason of some very skillful sculpture on his anatomy.

This byplay of ours is the secondary skill which can turn out to be most useful of all, even when very moderately developed. Your unpresiding officer qualifies as witness to this dogmatic statement, through the duration and variety of his encounters and experiences. It was from the beginning on his hospital histories when intern 78 years ago that he developed a pictorial stenography. This served him well in frequent clinical travel, here and abroad, actually to more hospitals than any one else of whom he has knowledge, as, for example, in fourteen countries in a single year. Reproductions of his drawings started with the woodcuts that antedated metal line cuts and halftones. For even in the earliest book illustrated (Skene), steps of operation were modeled as well as anatomy and pathology; colored, then depicted in oil, for lithography.

Drawing or painting is important additional training for any doctor. It sharpens his observation of detail and proportion. Whenever you depict trees or whatever, you are developing speed in facility of eye-record. Then, as you were looking at a standing posture, chest action or the facial expressions that furnish diagnostic clues, you have, by your sketching, sharpened and quickened your powers of observation, and saved much time needed for writing.

As a rather personal example, many decades of sketching from rail-road-train windows or from sailboats, and from many thousands of mobile faces, outlined in instants at medical meetings, gave a certain gynecologist snapshot facility in a field never before covered. Of that

* Note: Fully as distinguished an artist as he was a doctor, Robert L. Dickinson was the president of the New York Physicians Art Club for two years, his term of office ending only a short time before his lamented and untimely death in his ninetieth year. Unable to attend the dinner of the club on the vanishing night of the 1950 exhibition, he sent in this short paper which was read in his absence. It is published by the Bulletin of the Academy as a fitting medium for placing his message before a wider audience than the dinner afforded.—*Editor*.



Gothic arch called the vulva I have penned the form, life size, for 1378 ladies, mostly with many repeats. At first with exact measurements, but with time, there was little need of this check on the eye gauge. Thus my *Human Sex Anatomy* shows the first gallery of coverage of matters as interesting to mankind as the hymen and its frame, its dimensions and its elasticities, its sanguinary moral gauge. Such example is indeed relevant when the foremost of professors of medical art, Max Broedel, asked why all of the multitude of his pupils monotonized or malformed this area, answered, "Probably because I transfer my feeling of extreme distaste to them." And incidentally it may be noted that all that ancient art that featured the phallus bypassed the female genital forms.

Toward this hobby the shortest shortcut is the pencil, the softer, the quicker and broader. It's in any pocket, for any paper, with its soft kin the crayon and pastel qualifying next for the least outfitting, whereas time given to training for oil and watercolor calls for equipment and bothersome palette cleaning that minimizes opportunities for hobby riding.

I speak as champion of the fountain pen of the flexible point. Used with really black ink, the result is immediately reproducible for the inexpensive line cut. To make this point; in the 1950 club exhibit are



two sketches of mine which are timely as showing the formidable passes between steep mountains close around the city of Seoul which our soldiers recently had to capture.

I speak also for that pocket-size studio, a cigarette case holding a dozen or more inch-long colored crayons.

I urge on any medical author that he train himself or take a brief course to enable the final touches that insure the desired emphasis.

Three-dimensional methods hold first rank in visual teaching in many professional and lay aspects. Modelling as part of his hobby should therefore be considered by any doctor with an art urge, at least as part of his ways. As demonstration, the range runs from the surgeon who quarries whole lungs to him who re-attaches a retina. No drawing yields the results of the multiple lightings of the photograph of a sculpture. No cast of a specimen can demonstrate the unshrunk, uncollapsed surfaces reproduced by an accurate model. Nothing else can yield consistencies essential to recognition by the palpating finger of the differences between the non-pregnant and the early pregnant uterus, or the resistances in the variegated prostate. And the scope of reproducing the

bladder or rectal interiors is the last word in medical teaching, limited only by high cost and bulk. Such is the line of models of the steps of total hysterectomy by Falk, with the ingenuity of copying the inner ends of the multiple instruments in balsa wood.

Perhaps the acme of sculpture is to be found in the living form. In Rochester I watched an Adonis of a war-defaced youth, on the brink of marriage, with a remarkably remodelled face, getting the answer to his demand for the final step, namely, a reimplanted tiny shred called the risorius, to make his grin of happiness symmetrical.

We who can draw—and have taught ourselves—are convinced that any one can.

R E F E R E N C E S

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2. Dickinson, Robert Latou: What Medical Authors Need to Know about Illustrating. Proceedings of the Charaka Club, vol. VIII, pp. 141-148, 1935.
3. Dickinson, Robert Latou: Aristocratic Bookplates and their Working Cousins. Proceedings of the Charaka Club, vol. VIII, pp. 177-184.
4. *The New York Walk Book*. Editions of 1923, 1939, 1951. The 1951 edition is to appear shortly, published by the American Geographic Society. It is a completely revised edition; it includes many of Dr. Dickinson's drawings from the earlier editions but also many new, previously unpublished, drawings made by Dr. Dickinson for this edition. The drawings here reproduced are made from the original drawings through the courtesy of The American Geographical Society.